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ABSTRACT

This book is a collection of writing by students taking part in an adult basic education project from London and the North West of England. It illustrates ways students could think about and describe their experiences in as many ways as possible--on tape, in groups, and through writing. The writing is collected in five chapters. Chapter 1 offers descriptions and thoughts on the Ways of Learning Weekend in London and a residential weekend in Lancaster. Selections include: "The Weekend"; "Just Perfect"; "About Coming on the Weekend"; "More Comments about the Weekend"; "Lancaster University"; "I Was Frightened"; and "A Trip to Lancaster University." Chapter 2 contains thoughts on education. Selections include: "A Bad Learning Experience"; "Since I Start to Go to School"; "My Advice to Teachers"; "To Form a Student's Group"; "Letter to a Fellow Student"; "Happy to Be Here"; "When I Was at School"; "Find Another Way"; "Refugees"; "There Is No-one to Ask"; "I Wanted to Learn"; "No-one Could Hear My Cry"; "My First Job Was Cleaning"; "Now I'm Stuck"; "A Report about the New Study Centre"; "Working in a Group"; "Diary of My Return to Learning"; and "My School Days as Young Child." Chapter 3 includes thoughts on disability: "Some People Can Be Very Nasty"; "Dyslexia"; "Disablement Problems"; "What Is Disability?"; and "We Know Different." Chapter 4 has these "thoughts about ourselves": "Depression"; "My Mam's Dream"; "Anger"; "How I Remember"; "Chosen by My Mother"; "What Is Your Name?"; "Peoples Names Grow on Them"; "Looking Back to 1980"; "I Am a Superficial Man"; "The Joggers Life"; "Let People Express Themselves"; "Tonight I Lay Here"; "Life Back Home"; "Christmas Morning"; and "Finding a Job." Chapter 5 focuses on the Ways of Learning questionnaire designed and conducted by students. It summarizes responses and contains "Introduction to Fredrica's Report" (Evelyn Baptiste) and "A Research Report on Open Learning" (Fredrica Allan). (YLB)

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WEEKS OF LEARNING WEEKEND

We've tried – You try!

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"ALL I HAVE IS MY EXPERIENCE"

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

WAYS OF LEARNING WEEKEND

FOREWORD

'We tried, You try: All I have is my experience' is a collection of writing by students taking part in the Open Learning in Adult Basic Education Project from London and the North West of England.[1]

In the project, we are looking at how staff and students experience learning and teaching, in A.B.E. sessions and in Open Learning Centres; at what good learning experiences feel like and what makes them positive.

WRITING THE BOOK

We wanted to find ways students could think about and describe their experiences in as many ways as possible — on tape, in groups and through writing. The book comes out of a Ways of Learning Day for students in London, and a residential weekend in Lancaster.

Some people also sent us other writing they had done. People have written, amongst other things, about education and learning, about an important weekend many of us spent together, and thoughts and feelings on disability.

Research is about asking questions, and we wanted students to have the power to word and ask questions as well as answering them. So the book also includes findings from a questionnaire students on the project designed and carried out in North West England and London.

It shows that researchers who are also teachers may have one set of questions, students may have another. Students

and teachers in Adult Basic Education may find using this questionnaire, or designing your own, will help everyone understand more about how to create good learning experiences.

WRITERS AND EDITORS

The writers are all listed in the book. They and the research workers, Chris O' Mahony and Sue Bergin, met several times to discuss the content, the title and the pictures. Mary Hamilton and Wendy Moss contributed too.

The photographs were taken by Louise Lamport on the residential weekend in Lancaster in July 1992.

We hope you enjoy this book. If you would like to read other reports and writing from the project, contact us at the address below:

Open Learning in Adult Basic Education Project
Centre for the Study of Education and Training
University of Lancaster · LA1 4YL.
Telephone: **0524 592679**

[1] *This project is being carried out by workers in the Universities of Lancaster, and London (Goldsmiths College).*

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CHAPTER ONE

The Weekend

The Story of The Ways of Learning Weekend

Several students wrote about their experiences on the Ways of Learning Weekend. Here is the story of the weekend made up from a selection of writings by:

Fredrica Allan
Evelyn Baptiste
Sarah Andrews
Amy Mackintosh
Margaret O'Sullivan
Louise Pollett

FRIDAY

JOURNEY FROM LONDON TO LANCASTER

Margaret...

Last Friday morning, I left the house at 6.10 a.m. My son was giving me a lift into Harlesden so I could catch the minibus that was going to take me and fellow students to Lancaster. We were going to attend The Ways of Learning Weekend at Lancaster University, which all of us were looking forward to. After all the luggage was put into plastic bags and tied onto the

roof, we set off. The same time we set off, the rain decided to come with us. We went on the motorway.

Our first stop was only long enough to have a cup of tea, then we set off again. How the drivers could see to drive must be one of the seven wonders of the world. Apart from the rain pouring down, they had the splashback from other cars.

ARRIVING IN LANCASTER

Amy...

Oh! how delightful it all looked, just turning off the road to start coming up the most lovely laid out grounds, quite breathtaking. Then to see the buildings of the University - I thought it quite perfect.

Margaret...

About 1 p.m. we arrived. We were all very weary, cold and hungry. We were given our room and key number. Off we went, climbing what seemed to be a never-ending staircase. Luggage was dumped into the room, as we were more interested in food.

Amy...

Golly, gosh! I seemed to be on the go all the time. Walking all round, seeing all the places of interest, the very superb swimming pool, the shops, the layout of the grounds. Gosh - out of this world!

Margaret...

After we had tea and sandwiches, we all went off to do

our own thing. We met back for a tour of the campus and introductions to the people who came from the North West.

Then, at last, we had what we had been waiting for - Dinner! It was very nice. Afterwards we had a large group meeting to get to know each other.

WELCOMES AND GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Amy...

We soon got to know one another by the ways our teachers taught us how to remember - different ways to make it easier for us to remember each others name - terribly good, it was.

Evelyn...

Most of the students shared about their College and how they were treated. Some of them had bad experiences, while others enjoyed their time spent working together. We also had an interview to see how each one gets on in their colleges individually. It was great.

Freddie ...

9 o'clock, we were still talking about ourselves and the open learning centres. How many hours we spent there and how much one pays there...

Margaret...

The evening ended with some people going to the bar and some had an early night.

Ways of Learning Weekend

SATURDAY

Amy...

Saturday arrived, not a very nice day, though I don't think many of us thought much about the weather as it was all so exciting.

LEARNING TO LEARN WORKSHOP

Freddie...

Later, we were asked what we found difficult to remember. Some said names, spelling, and I said I find it difficult to store information. So, Wendy got us all to say our name and also to say something about

ourselves. We were asked if learning is the same as we remember. I thought it was a good idea because by the end of the class I could remember almost all the students names in the class. We talked about skills we've got and how we learn them.

Amy ...

I went to the Learning to Learn workshop - really good. Many things were new to me.

Louise...

Back to Back. We did an exercise which we were back to back in. That is, sat back to back: One was given a paper with a simple drawing on it (see picture on page 15) "Now explain it."

My explanation was: Imagine an egg cup with no base. You know - an egg cup cut in half. Then, from the middle of the curved bit, draw a petal, then on the bottom draw another petal. As you can see, this is not

a very good description. As we have learnt, it is not very easy to describe things. We know what they are, but we can't explain them.

Sarah...

To tell and describe an object or illustration to someone who hasn't seen it before can be very difficult. It is easier to listen and look than to tell you what the object and size is about.

Evelyn...

We talked about the kind of ways how we can help our tutors help us. We felt that the method of teaching should change at many times. Also asking the tutors to check our work each day. An open communication with ourselves and the tutors helps us to understand our work more and to build a strong friendship within each other.

THE STANDING UP FOR YOURSELF WORKSHOP

Evelyn...

Being able to stand up for yourselves sometimes can be difficult, but saying no to someone in any situation means we have to be independent and to stand on our own two feet. We also have every right to say no when we want to.

Amy...

The Standing Up for Yourself workshop, I think, was very good and interesting. I only wish I'd gone to the second meeting of that subject.

WAYS OF LEARNING WORKSHOP

Evelyn...

We looked at skills we have and how we learnt them:

1. Gardeners, repair body work on cars.
2. Singer, hairdresser, sales assistant.
3. Office cleaner, catering and knitting, etc.

How we've learned them

1. By being taught, given small instruction.
2. By making mistakes.
3. Learning from others and having great observation.
4. Getting general help from watching films.
5. A lot of hard work, lots of practising. Each day to show yourself approval.

TRIP INTO LANCASTER

Freddie ...

We were taken to the main town. Harry, Amy, Rocio, Lou, Helen, Abi and myself went to the shops. Rocio went to Boots because she wanted some batteries for her camera. Harry and Lou went off to see old buildings. The rest of us went to find the castle. Rocio took a picture of the castle and we talked to an old woman who very kindly told us a little bit about the castle and she showed us the sea from where we were standing. We then went into the church. Helen bought a book about Lancaster. Rocio bought some postcards. I took Amy to The Body Shop for her to buy face cream.

Amy...

We popped into Lancaster, went to look at Lancaster Castle and the Priory, then looking out over to, I think, the sea, quite breathtaking. But, oh my hat, the hills and downs! My poor darling old legs are getting a wee bitty past it. Never mind, it's all so fascinating.

Off into the shopping part, looking all round, hearing the organ playing in the centre. Then back to our transport to return to the University for 4.15 to 4.30, tea. Gosh, I needed it by then and the biscuits we got were gorgeous - yummy!

Evelyn...

To me, personally, Lancaster is beautiful. Just looking at the lovely mountains and the tall trees gives me vision for another trip. I enjoyed walking through the

city, although villages are small the beauty was the stores and the amazing prices for different shopping.

FEELINGS ABOUT EDUCATION WORKSHOP

Freddie...

We did drawing about how you felt at school, one was happy, unhappy, sad or miserable.

Amy..

And all the lovely talking and exchanging of what we did, and didn't, do. So very exhilarating. Another large group meeting, followed by our party.

THE PARTY

Amy...

Oh, what an evening it was. It took me back years and I felt years younger. It was so darned good to feel and be a part of the Ways of Learning weekend. Heck, I

danced and laughed, tap-danced, and really let my jolly old hair down. Then to bed, and off I went, fast asleep.

Freddie...

At the party we had a lot of drinks. Everyone was happy. Denise and Sue showed Abi how to tap dance. I had a wonderful time.

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SUNDAY

Amy...

Up at the early hour, with my alarm going and ready for our last day. How the time had flown and right now I wanted my breakfast. Then into the Writing Workshop or Choice Workshop.

WRITING WORKSHOP

Amy...

I went on to the computer. There - I can't believe I'm writing my story on a computer, something I'd never done before I came to my Open Learning Centre - unbelievable. But, oh, how my mind and whole being has been given a new lease of life.

Freddie...

Went to the Workshop on Sunday after breakfast. I did computing. Denise was very helpful - she showed me how to get in and how the University computers work. I had a short time with Denise showing me how to work on the computer and she was just wonderful, because not all people know how to teach someone for the first time and for them to understand. After that I went to the spelling classes. Mary and Wendy were teaching.

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OUR LAST GROUP MEETING

Amy...

Now our last group meeting. Here we had a talk by teachers and a charming lady about how they had brought the magazine about. Now it is all over. Oh what a most divine experience this has been for me.

Freddie...

Mary talked about a book another group of students had written. Mary said our views as students are a very important part of this course. Margaret talked about the questionnaire. All the students wrote something good and bad about the weekend, which we took in turn to read out.

We took our pictures, said our goodbyes with kisses and hugging and promises that we will all write to each other.

GOING HOME

Amy...

I had doubts about coming here... How very hard we can make our lives just through self-negativeness, aren't we so unjust to ourselves? Now with this our last day, I feel quite sad. I've met so many very really nice people, you know - quite wonderful. Oh, why do we waste such a lot of our time not doing really what we want to do? Oh how wonderful these say, three days, have been. So much has been, I'm sure, achieved by each and every one of us. Nobody can take my

thoughts and all the things I've learnt, felt, done, seen, experienced. All my meetings and talkings to the delightful students I've met.

Now my thanks must go to all the teachers who have, unknown to themselves, given their time, understanding, patience, knowledge and, most of all themselves to us. I am so grateful and thankful that I have had this golden opportunity. Thank you one and all.

Evelyn...

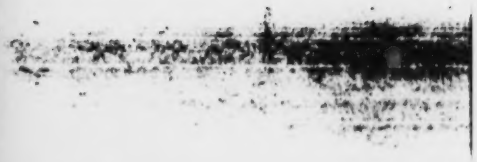
I had a wonderful time in Lancaster. I enjoyed talking to the waiter and waitress - they were very friendly and helpful. The food was fantastic. If I were to spend another weekend again I would really love it.

Freddie...

I found the whole weekend very stimulating. I was glad to be part of such a wonderful team. What I liked most of all was everyone was present. The teachers were all excellent and also the two ladies who were looking after the children were smashing.

Apart from Rocio and myself getting ourselves locked up in the toilet by accident on Saturday, everything was magnificent. I enjoyed everything and everyone enormously. Keep up the good work and God Bless.

I learned a lot of good things at the Ways of Learning Weekend.



Just Perfect

Everything was wonderful: coming here; meeting all the lovely teachers and students.

"Standing Up for Yourself" was good and the "Drawing Workshop" with Mary and Sue was also very good.

I had a short time with Denise showing me how you work the computer and she was just wonderful, because not all people know how to teach someone for the first time and for them to understand.

In all, everything was just perfect, everyone was excellent.

Freddie Allan

About coming on the Weekend

I said I'd think about coming,
but thought "no".
But I did.
Thought "No, will hate it."
But I was wrong.
I've really got into it.
The people are sound.
It's taught me a lot.
It's been wild.

Thank you.

Louise Pollett

MORE COMMENTS ABOUT THE WEEKEND

"I think all the workshops were very helpful to me. It was nice to know people who are doing the same as we do in our Open Learning and in no way I felt uncomfortable. Everything was nice, and we had a friendly and relaxed environment that was great".

"It's good that learning doesn't have to be serious and intense. I like having fun and using creative ways to help me. I find things stick in my mind".

"Sitting here in this very large room, having had a very nice talk about so many things, really is all quite unbelievable. So many different subjects have been told and talked about. This whole weekend has been full - no time to feel down or unhappy. The teachers are all really rather the tops, which makes one feel good, and one thing I've heard -there has been no talking down or being put down to any of us - as least that's my feeling. To me everything is important. I only wish all this could have happened to me years and years ago".

"I liked the friendly atmosphere. Food, rooms, people, everything".

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"I liked the way people are together in groups, and the relaxed feeling of learning. I like the way we have breaks in between and do other things".

"The Weekend was good in one respect in that it was a chance to meet people of all ages and areas and hear their personal experiences of education. Also, it was an inside view of living on a campus as a student".

"We should do this every month, getting away from home. Got more confidence: especially from Standing up for Yourself Workshop".

"I like the friendliness of it all. I like the smaller classes. I liked the teachers. Nice facilities. I like seeing other people come from my level and really getting on - it gives me a lot of hope".

"I was interviewed by Christine at my centre and, at first, I did not think much about it. But after a few weeks I received a letter from her and I was very pleased. I have enjoyed the centre and everything is good. The thing I enjoyed most is using the computer and open learning".

"The weekend has been very valuable and made me realise there was a lot of things I didn't realise I could do.

Very good. Meals excellent. Workshops OK. People were very helpful".

"Thank you for bringing me up there to learn a bit extra. I liked the trip"

"Food, people, conversation, being there".

"It was good. I liked the weekend. It went too quick".

"I had a wonderful time. The meals were good. The people were friendly".

"I enjoyed the Stand Up Workshop. I was surprised and discovered things in me I didn't know I had".

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"Going home from Lancaster University has given me wonderful confidence".

"There hasn't been enough time to do everything I wanted to do (e.g. go for a swim). It should be Friday to Wednesday".

"I think it could have been even longer, because we were rushing around a lot and when you are in one group, sometimes you didn't get time to finish what you were doing before you had to go to dinner or do something else".

"I would have liked to do more writing and spelling".

"I want people to mind their own business. Too many people telling you what they think your problem is. I ran away a lot. I never did enough writing".

"I think there were too many tea breaks. The last day we should have had discussion from 9.30 - 12.30. The first day, after an hours rest, we should have gone and done something".

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"Didn't like the map - it's not very good and the bed was too hard".

"Sometimes you didn't understand what was going to happen in a group. So I think a lot of people went in a group just to see what was going to happen".

"All day Saturday I was very cold, had two jumpers on - also it was too cold to move. In a big group of people, of strangers, I find it difficult to listen to everyone talking. I was very exhausted at the end of the day".

"Breakfast at 8.am. Rainy weather".

"The bed was hard".

"Found it very claustrophobic. Needed more time. Everything was rushed".

"It would be better if it was longer, over three days".

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"I would have like to have longer time here".

Better music at party .

"Shops open all time?"

"Didn't like acting out a situation".

"Cold all the time. Not enough free time to look around the place".

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LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

I found the conference meeting rather boring and then I looked at it from a different angle. It was a subtle way of thinking without realising it, and it helped me to look at a better way of learning.

Spellings - The concept of learning to improve my skills of writing to aim for qualifications is sometimes difficult as there are certain quiet sounds (sometimes in the middle of words) that I do not hear, so consequently, I have difficulty in spelling them.

Standing Up for Yourself - It is easier to watch an act than to perform. You have to learn the concept - how to hear the volume of speech, how to imagine what the play is about, how to move about in a very small or large space and watch the actors expression - whether they are happy, sad, cross, etc.

Describing - To tell and describe an object or illustration to someone who hasn't seen it before can be very difficult. It is easier to listen and look than to tell you what the object and size is about. I felt I was looking too much ahead and thinking I wasn't learning. I have to lower myself to a certain level and build up the concept of learning from there.

Sarah Andrews

Ways of Learning Weekend

I WAS FRIGHTENED

I was very frightened to come on this weekend course. I didn't want to come because I'm not very good at spelling and I thought that if I had to do any writing some words would be spelt wrong. People would laugh at me. But, as it happened, they didn't, because we were all the same and we helped each other, so it made us all feel needed.

I'm really glad I came, I've really enjoyed it and I feel better about doing some writing now. It has helped me to realise that I'm not on my own in this world and lots of other people don't face up to the reality of not being able to spell. I would like to say thank you to everyone who has helped me - the ones who encouraged me to come and all those who have helped me whilst I've been here.

Helen Farrell

A TRIP TO LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

On 3 July 1991, I visited the city of Lancaster in the far north of England. The students of Ealing Study Centre had a conference there to discuss plans for improving their skills for the near future. Some students that were there came from different countries and had a different background. They learn how they can make a positive progress in their daily lives.

Walking though the city gives me great interest to see the small shops and the amazing way the shop owners sell their products.

Across the mountainside of Lancaster looked beautiful as I walked step by step during the day. In the City there were lots of people. Walking about, it was very hot.

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I love reading and writing but I spent most of my time with the older women, talking and sharing different ideas. As a grown up, I love mixing with people - to share all different kinds of interest together, as I begin to talk I have learned that people are a lot different in many ways. Learning is skill. It helps to make life easy to live. In Lancaster there is a lot to learn. It's great to know you can learn so much from one part of the country.

Evelyn Baptiste

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CHAPTER TWO

Thoughts on Education

I was very unhappy I was told I'd never be able to read or write - I was told that by an Educational psychologist!

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A BAD LEARNING EXPERIENCE

In 1980 I joined Richmond College for evening classes. It was just sort of basic reading and writing, on a Thursday evening.

I was looking forward to having a tutor to myself for an hour, because for the previous two years I had only worked in groups. So on the Thursday evening I went along at 7.30 and the thing is I wasn't actually nervous, but I ended up absolutely shattered. She said to me:

How long have you been coming to evening classes?

I said: Two years, and she give me a little test in reading and I told her what else I'd been doing and then she said:

You haven't learnt very much. And she said: You can come along if you want to, but we'll waste each others time.

So I was quite disturbed - and I'm still disturbed 12 years later.

This woman was the head literacy teacher at Richmond - I've forgotten her name.

I wanted to go to Richmond College because I had just moved to Richmond, but I landed up going back to Drayton Park where I knew the tutors and I knew I would like it.

The head teacher at Drayton Park got in touch with the head teacher at Richmond and got me my money back.

Cornelius Scollon

SINCE I START TO GO TO SCHOOL

Since I start to go to school
I learn good things.
I read stories and magazines
for the first time.
I read my Christmas card
to my family.

I happy to meet lots of people
and teachers.
I hear so many things today.
They been very caring.

Panayiota Hadjiandrea

My Advice to teachers

I think that group teaching
is a good thing
for some of the time,
and word games.

I think teachers
should not be afraid
of letting pupils help each other
some of the time.

Brian Brooker

TO FORM A STUDENT'S GROUP

There is a need to form a students body at my Open Learning Centre.

This message came cross quite clear at the talks held at The New Study Centre in the time we set aside to discuss The City & Guilds Wordpower. So much interest was shown in the subject at various levels by the students from other parts of London.

One point that came out was so important. I, along with other students, felt clarification was needed by the City & Guilds on standardising the tasks set in Wordpower marking: Do we answer what they have **written** as a task, or what they **think in their mind** is a task? e.g. is oral *spoken* oral?, or *written* oral? e.g. what do they mean by a route? a tourer with a guide, or what?

In my own case this has already caused me to leave my Centre - give up on Wordpower. I only went back after talks with a tutor - and this did help to clear up the subject to a degree.

In my case I seem to find a conflict of opinions between the tutors and this is not good enough for the student, as I believe changes come within, not without. It would seem the same case with the City & Guilds Assessors - why?

Bill Mackenzie

Letter to a fellow student.

Hi Pravin,

I am writing to you about Open Learning Centre.

We go to evening classes on Wednesday for two hours once a week but I think that is not enough. Open learning centres are open four days a week - 9.30 to 4.30 and you can come any day at any time. You can do many things in there like trying to learn computers. Pravin, I went on Friday to New Study Centre and it was fun. See you soon.

Ramesh Patel

HAPPY TO BE HERE

I am happy to be here today.
It is a great day for me.
I would like to do more reading and writing.
I enjoy going to classes to learn lots of things.
I am happy to meet lots of people
It was a nice day for me.
I should remember today,
May 15th 1992.
How much help I have with the teachers –
someone to help me,
more and more, please.
Because I need help.
I am praying to God to help me
with my reading.
I had lots to eat and drink.
It was a very nice day.

Vera Rabess

WHEN I WAS AT SCHOOL

I left in 1977 because I stayed on
till I was 16 years old.
The only one who stayed on with me
was Joseph.

My reading then was zilch.
The only thing I could manage
was my signature, sad to say.

My favourite subject was Maths.
I was not bad at Maths.
Compared to some people,
I was laughing.
Then I had special P.E. as well.
It's an extra activity in P.E.
for people who were not very fit.

Sometimes I had difficulty breathing,
but I don't know why.
I never worried.
My Dad didn't believe in inhalers,
he thought they would make me worse.

I didn't mind school.

I like History especially.
I like to see into the past.
I love museums.
I still like to visit museums,
have a nose around.
I like country music too,
but that's another story.

James Lands

FIND ANOTHER WAY

I knew for a long time that I needed help with my English, especially my spelling, punctuation, writing and grammar. I felt embarrassed about not being able to write properly - that made it hard for me to get help.

I finally decided to get help with my writing. I made an appointment to see a tutor at Craven Park Learning Centre, I was very nervous about going because I did not know what to expect.

When I arrived at the centre I had a talk with a tutor. I told her I needed help with my writing and spelling. She then give me a pen and some paper and told me to write something about my self. I felt very embarrassed about being told to write something especially when I needed help with my writing. I felt that it was forced upon me.

I feel that new students should be given a choice whether they want to write something about themselves, especially on their first day to a new Centre.

I have spoken to a few students about being told to write something about themselves on arrival to a new Centre. They all say they feel embarrassed about being told to write something about themselves.

I think tutors should find another way of assessing new students so they do not feel embarrassed.

Derek Brathwaite

REFUGEES

I think one of the important things about the Study Centre is the people whose first language is not English.

They need a lot of help and support with their English as some of the students here have just been in Britain a certain time, and some are refugees and have come to the Centre.

We have English classes here for them.

Tracey Elland

THERE IS NO-ONE TO ASK

When you are at school
if you don't understand
what is being taught in the class,
there is no one to ask,
no one to help you.

You have to just get on,
try and pull through
and hope for the best.
So next time you go to the class
you are further behind with your work.

Helen Farrell

I WANTED TO LEARN

I decided to go to college
because I wanted to learn more
about computers and much more.

I travel to college on public transport.
I go five days a week.
The teachers are very helpful,
I think they can help you
with any problem.

Andrew Worosczuk

NO-ONE COULD HEAR MY CRY

My experience at school was really scary - being around people who were brainy - being around people who didn't like me because I wasn't part of their world. So I made up my own world. I alienated myself. I took in what these people were saying to me. They were saying Right, look at me - I am useless.

People didn't need to bully me any more as I had picked up the skill myself. I thought to myself in my own little world. If I am not part of them, who am I? What am I going to do? I don't belong here - even my teacher doesn't think I am good at my work.

I was excellent at sport, but they wouldn't put me in the team because I was no good at my work. So how do I do my work? I would cry to myself, quite frustrated. No-one could hear my cry apart from me - there was no-one in my lonely world to share it with.

I.Q. Tests

I used to stand in a queue waiting to go in to class - the pupils used to give me I.Q. tests. I couldn't answer their questions. It used to make people laugh and then I thought: "Oh, I know, I'll make myself look silly. I will do things I'm not supposed to - that's what I'm good at. I don't know how much trouble this will make for me but

there is one good thing - at least I won't get called stupid or thick. I get to be called disruptive, disobedient, disinterested and a pain".

Well that was better than being called thick. I had found my identity.

I couldn't understand why it was difficult for me to do my work. I remember in an Infants School I was at, I was the best reader in the class. People never used to call me thick - it was scruffy and all sorts of names like that. My mum was quite poor - so she couldn't afford to buy us decent clothing.

I wasn't completely bad

In the end I used to bunk off school, sniff glue in the bike sheds and be totally disruptive. I was mouthy to the teachers, because I felt like I pushed through so much feelings to go to school and I would have loved to have had the knowledge they did.

I wasn't completely bad as there was two teachers I actually liked there - they didn't work with their power/ authority. They worked with care and understanding. They made it very safe for me - they were human beings. That was definitely the right way to approach me.

I gave up on all hope around my education and it made

my life a misery -once a thicko, always one. Then, in 1991, I got a job which was really important to me and it required administration work. So I started going to adult education and met Chris, who got me interested in going to a weekend Ways of Learning Workshop and there I met a load of nice, intelligent people who had similar difficulties to me and it gave me so much hope. The important thing I learnt is: there are different ways to learn - not just the way a teacher would teach; and also it takes people time, but they can still get to the same level as people who tend to pick up on things better.

Louise Lamport

MY FIRST JOB WAS CLEANING

When I came to London in 1962,
my first job was cleaning
and I do it still
because I don't have the education
to do any other job.

The reason I want to read and write is,
when a letter comes through my door,
I can't read it by myself.
I feel I want to open it now
and read about my family,
my mum, my dad.
When I can't read it, I feel angry.

I feel down because
I can't take the train at all.
In the doctors surgery
I can't read the sign.

I am a religious person.
I'm a Catholic.
I wanted to help them.
They asked me to read the Bible.
I told them I couldn't read.
They told me they'd teach us,
but I was too ashamed.

Ways of Learning Weekend

My friend pushed me to go to college.
I've been going for two terms now.

Wilmina Denys

NOW I'M STUCK

I would like to improve my spelling. I would also like to improve Maths and English. I go to college for 24 hours a week. The things that I most like to do are: Maths, English and computers.

They have open learning at my College, called Workshop. I knew what I wanted to work at before, but now I'm stuck.

A couple of the tutors at college say: Don't bother about the spelling, just write it down. but I turn around and say to myself: Well, if I can't read what I've written, how can I expect DHSS to read it?

When we first went to College, we was asked if we wanted to be full-time or part-time students, so I chose the full-time course. Then a couple

of weeks later someone came to college and told us that we could have a grant, and - we wasn't bothered about the grant, but we was told that we was entitled to a book grant - so we took it. It was £570 each. But now we've found out with the cut backs and everything else, that there isn't going to be a grant. It's not only the grants -it's the actual hours that have been cut.

Alf McDonald

A report about the New Study Centre

I go to Open Learning Centre at Ealing Tertiary College. I always ask the tutors what I can do next to complete my work for the week. I sometimes use my own initiative to do things on my own.

Making friends is very important to all the students. We both need each other for help and encouragement. I understand most of the students. We get along very well.

Evelyn Baptiste

Ways of Learning Weekend

WORKING IN A GROUP

Sometime in Open Learning we work together. It's really encouraging. There were times when I just couldn't seem to understand anything at all and when I ask for someone to help me, I begin to feel happy and encouraged. I then get a chance to see why I couldn't understand.

After a little while I try to work on my own so it won't be so difficult next time. Working together helps bring out the pride in each one.

Evelyn Baptiste

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DIARY OF MY RETURN TO LEARNING

After staying at home for the last 12 months, after becoming a mother for the second time, I thought to myself: This is all I will be doing for the next five years - wasting away.

I had thought about improving myself, but never did anything about it. After watching a series of programmes on television about adult education, I decided to phone the numbers being given. After a few days I received information from the Open University. This is no help to me because the fees are expensive. There was also information on the Open College. I looked through the leaflet and decided Accountancy was what I would like to do. Anyway, for a full course, it's £400 - so that is another setback.

On the phone, I had spoken to a woman about my position and the things I would like to do and she informed me how to go about things. As a one-parent family, and living on Income Support, I don't think there is a lot of things I can do. Anyway, I went along to the College and was told about the Flexible Learning courses. I was told that there is a creche. I went on to enrol on a basic maths course and then went down to the creche. They only take children from 12 months old and there is a waiting list, so I can only afford to attend two sessions out of the five.

Tuesday 17th - This is the first day at College. I walked in and found the room I was looking for. I was feeling all nervous. Will I be the oldest there? Will anybody speak to me? Should I back out now?

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After walking into the room I was asked to sit down at a table. I was sat there for 15 minutes before a tutor came over. I feel like going home already.

I was given some fractions to do. I can't even remember how to do those. I was never any good at maths anyway. I was shown how to do these by a tutor and I found them quite easy. Maybe it's easier to pick things up when you are older.

The day seemed to go very quickly. I'm looking forward to the next time.

Wednesday 18th - Everything seems to be OK. There are two sisters I know from a few years ago, so today I will have someone to talk to. The first seems to find the work hard. I couldn't concentrate because they were talking. Next time I think I will sit by myself.

Tuesday 24th - I got here about 15 minutes early. There isn't many people in. When they started to arrive the room got quite full. The tutor asked me if everything was OK. Apart from that I have been left alone. I could sit here all day and do nothing, because no-one has asked to see my work.

Wednesday 25th - I didn't go to college today. I have flu.

Tuesday - Arrived at 12.30. I thought I would try and get a bit of extra work done before Keith comes in because he always talks all the time. I went into the canteen today and some people off the course started talking to me. I was talking to a girl named Donna. She

has been on the course quite a while. She said nobody talks to her. I thought it was me was beginning to get a complex.

Wednesday - Am starting to think twice about this course. I like coming here, but it's getting more difficult to come here because of childminding problems. I don't think the creche facilities are much use. There's not nearly enough places for a College this size.

I know some people on this course get £10.00 extra on their Unemployment Benefit for coming here. So I have tried to claim some money back for bus fares and childminder but, because I have come here voluntarily, and not been sent here by the Job Centre, I can't claim a penny. I seem to be getting kicked back all the time.

For a woman in my position things are hard. I can't afford to work because I can't get a job which pays enough to bring up my family, and I am out of pocket trying to better myself while I have all this spare time on my hands.

Tuesday - Saw Gary today but, before I could speak to him about the work he said he was going to do for you, he had gone. He only stayed approx. 20 minutes.

Wednesday - Did not go to College today.

April

Tuesday - I arrived at College at 12.30 today. I look forward to coming to college now. It makes me feel better knowing that my brain cells aren't dead after all. The first time I came here - just a few weeks ago -

I felt really nervous. Now I feel a bit more confident in myself, plus I am enjoying the work I am doing.

Wednesday - Because I cannot attend College as often as I would like to , I try to do quite a bit of work at home. So today I joined the college library, so now I don't have to struggle to buy any books.

May

Tuesday - I got my child into the College creche today, so now I will be able to attend college every Tuesday if I want to. People seem to be a bit more friendly now. I have made a few more friends. I talked to David today - he asked if I had enrolled for the next exams in November. I would like to - the fee is approx.£15.00. I will probably talk to one of the tutors tomorrow.

Wednesday - I arrived early today. I think that it's good that I can go into the room in the lunch hour.

Jackie Haworth

MY SCHOOL DAYS AS YOUNG CHILD

I start school when I was six years old. I enjoyed school very much, but had to dismiss myself from school at the age of twelve years old because of my teachers behaviour. Whenever he goes out for lunch, he would come back drunk and asking questions, we did not know the answer. When we could not give the answer he would swipe me and one day it was too much to bear. He swipe me so bad my back was bruise. I did not tell my mum but she saw it and ask me about it. But, already, I had lose interest in school and did not go back so I did not learn much. At least I learn to write my name and read small books.

But when I came to London, I decided to go back to school. I left before I had the chance to learn anything much. So, when we were made redundant two years ago, I make up my mind to start part-time college at Bethnal Green and that where Chris meet me and ask if I did not mind making a tape explaining about my education. What I do at college, what I like doing.

Then she arrange a trip to visit Lancaster University and ask me if would like to come and the answer was yes.

I never think there was so much to learn. This trip has built up my confidence. The first time I ever use the computer was when I went to Lancaster University and now I am learning the word processor and now work to Wordpower. There is so much yet to learn. You never too old to learn. There is always something new one would like to add to their education. My spelling is not that good but I am working on it and hope to get better.

Agatha Athanaze

CHAPTER THREE

Thoughts on Disability

Some People Can be Very Nasty

I went to school.
People made fun of me,
my talking, reading and writing.
Some people can be very nasty -
except one lad - he was OK with me.

I had to sit at the front because I was slow
with writing and reading.

Sometimes I feel like shouting out,
losing my rag, at people
because they don't understand me.
Shops are like that - except Smiths.
I felt alright there.
I know three ladies there.

Other shops I don't really talk in.
I can't read the lunch menu or

anything, so I have to ask people
to read them to me.

I am going to Speech Therapy now
and getting
better at talking.

Pamela Humphreys

DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia, oh Dyslexia,
I may have you,
you don't have me
for I've discovered words
I am finding ways
of getting around you
and win a war which I have to win
for the love of written words.

Len Hollywood

Disablement Problems

I have lots of difficulties with learning because I got sent home from school when I was five and went back when I was seven. This was because I had a speech impediment and they wouldn't accept me at school.

I went to special school when I was ten years old. I don't agree with special school I think they should be integrated into ordinary everyday education.

I've managed in the past four years to learn a foreign language - German - and I didn't find it very hard.

I would like to learn Braille and would like to do a course on Nursery Education. I would like to do sign language and I would like to be better at Maths.

Elizabeth Harkness

What is Disability?

What is disability? This is a very good question.; The word itself is not good. We could say "What is *different*?"

Is disablement wrong? Are we to feel wrong? Inferior? Not equal to the ones we think of as perfect? We only think they are. How do you cope with being *different*, *disabled*; "not the norm?" Can you cope?

Why is it that if you're different, people look at you as if you are a second class citizen? It's so bloody wrong. It's actually them who have the problem - not us - the imperfect. You can be with a whole gang of disabled/ different people and be comfy - no one points you out and calls you at all. They treat you as an equal because these people have had it tough and they've learnt in life to be nice because it's that that counts at the end of the day.

I find it really hard to describe being different. I am - are you? When I look at you I don't see your - how can I say? - problems, so you shouldn't see mine - fair's fair.

How much pain and suffering must we suffer in our short existence? Are you happy? If I had everything in the whole world that money could buy, I'd still be sad. Deep, deep inside of me is a pain just of living this life. I believe I was born in the wrong body.

I have a good personality and really I love my fellow human beings if they'd only give me a chance. I'm happy with the way I look, i.e. eyes, nose, etc. I'm not fussy, but to be born to be fat was a waste of everything. I'm neither disabled or normal. What am I then? Some f..... freak? Because in my eyes (like many others) I am. So what about all those poor silent buggers out there? Help them! I intend to speak out for these people one day.

I want to do a questionnaire:

If you're in a wheelchair and you can't walk, you are physically disabled.

If you're in a mental hospital, you are mentally disabled. Then there are the people with sight, hearing, etc. problems, but we know (society says) that they are disabled. They are labelled that for life.

So what about the people who are just *different*?

1. What do you think of:-
- **(a) deaf people?**
- **(b) fat people?**
- **(c) disabled - any type - speech wheelchair?**

2. What do you think I eat?

3. How much do I eat?

4. Do you know about being fat?

5. What is your first reaction to seeing someone fat?

6. Whose fault is it?
- **(a) mine?**
- **(b) parents?**
- **(c) illness - health?**

7. What would you do, (if you were fat)?

8. If you could not do anything about it, how would you cope?

9. Do you judge on seeing a person, or do you get to know them a little first?

Louise Pollett

We know different

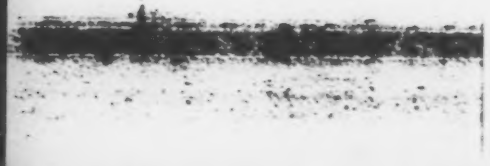
I think able bodied people
think they are better than the disabled,
but we know different
and we try not to let them get us down.
If you feel you can ignore them then do so.

If you feel you cannot ignore them
then go and see a supervisor
and they can help you.

Andrew Worosczuk

CHAPTER FOUR

Thoughts about Ourselves



Depression

This is my personal view of depression.

Depression comes on fast and can last days on end. It is like a cloud of gloom coming over you. While this is happening, you can't think anything positive and all you see is despair.

When I feel like this, my concentration level is very low. This can be made worse by teachers asking questions which at the time you cannot possibly answer. The only thing that comes out of the teacher asking questions is that the depression gets deeper.

Michael Davies

MY MAM'S DREAM

One day I asked my Mam:
"How did I get my name?"
and she replied:
"I had a dream
the day before I gave birth to you".
She said there was a little boy,
with "James Edwards Lands" on his chest.
Then the next day
she decided when she woke up
that she like the sound of the name
so she kept it.
I didn't have a choice in the matter!
Actually, I do like the nickname I've got which is Dickie Mint and one person calls me James Bond and I don't mind that either.

James Lands

Ways of Learning Weekend

scream inside
hate yourself so much it's hard to survive
smack them
suicidal feeling
ANGER
don't trust people
watch to see if they are laughing at me
listen to anything they may say about me
feeling of not wanting to live

How the hell can you sit and judge me on what your tiny, narrow, mind lets you see? I'm an angry person who is sick and fed up of this world - or should I say the people in it?

If you have ever felt lonely then you may, just may, be able to very slightly understand the pain and hurt that different people suffer.

I cry! I scream! But just like someone in a wheelchair, I'm trapped -between normal and not normal.

I was a clever child, very clever. As I got older and

fatter, I got badder - until I refused to go to school to be called and called until I wanted to die. I was bad, really bad, but I couldn't cope with me. I still can't cope with me. I have strange views and still think death would be a welcome relief.

Louise Pollett

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How I remember

I remember when I was fourteen years old, how to cook cakes at school and the anger!

When I left school I felt thick, because I did not know how to read and spell. I was in a world of my own. My mother sent me to live in and look after children and cleaning. I had to find my way from Sale to Northwich to go home. Two trains and one bus. That was hard to do.

I met a girl called Sylvia at church. I told her about my reading and spelling. So every Sunday afternoon I went for tea. We both sat in the front room and tried to do work on words.

I left Sale and went to Preston. I got a job in the hospital as a maid in the kitchen, making the nurses breakfasts. I was asked to be an Assistant Cook but, because I couldn't read and write, I said no.

I started to go to lessons at 17 years old, at night, but it didn't come to me very easily. I can read now, but can't spell.

But, I've done a lot of things in my life. It hasn't stopped me having a husband and three children. I've learned to drive a car and have driven all over the country - gone from Preston to Lands End in a car. I can do it.

Irene Swan

Chosen by my Mother

My name is Ramesh Somabhai Patel
and my fathers name is Somabhai.
I have no idea why I am called Ramesh
but I know why my surname is Patel.

In India, where my father comes from,
all the people in his village
have the surname Patel.

I like my name because it was chosen by my Mother.

My other names are Pitte and Ramu.

My friends in Kenya call me Pitte
because I was short
and my friends in England call me Ramu.
I like my name and I don't want to change it.
Also, I don't mind being called by
nicknames.

Ramesh Patel

What is your name?
Gary James

Have you any idea why you are called by that name?
I don't know why they called me Gary James. I think the James is because I am from a Catholic family.

Do I like my name?
Yes, I've grown to like it.

How many other names do you have? What are they? Who calls you what?
I don't have any other names except, when I was younger, they called me Gaz.

Are there some names that you like, or don't like, to be called more than others?
There are several names I like. Mine's Gary, and I like that also.

Have you ever wanted to change your name, or ever changed your name?
The answer to both questions is no.

Gary Nylands

Peoples Names Grow on Them

My name is Jacqueline Ann Haworth. I don't know why I am named Jacqueline, but I do know that I got my second name after Princess Ann. I quite like my name, because there is not really a lot of Jacquelines around.

My mother was the only person to call me by my proper name. The rest of the family either call me Jackie or Jack. Sometimes it is nice to hear people call me by my name but it does not happen very often. I never thought of changing my name. I think that peoples' names grow on them

There is a few names that I like. I named my first daughter Lisa Marie. At the time, I didn't know very many Lisas, but now there is quite a lot I know.

My second daughter was going to be named Hannah but it would not really go with her last name, so I called her Paula. I liked Paula at the time, but now I regret calling her Paula, but now she answers to her name,so it's too late to change it. The name Paula means small, and when she was born she was very small, so I thought the name was appropriate.

If I had any more children I would choose the name Angela for a girl, and Dean for a boy. I also like the name Leigh, spelt L-e-i-g-h, not L-e-e.

Jackie Haworth

Looking back to 1980

In 1980 I was 44 years old.
I remember that special event -
my son got married.

In the eighties I had a small
change in my life -
I bought my own place.
I have lived in that same address for twenty years.

I like the same music but I have added
a different kind of music to the one I usually play.
I can now play the violin.

Things have changed.
I've lost my job.

Well, things are different.
When you are not working,
you feel left out.

I hope to live to my retirement
so I could go home to the West Indies.

Agatha Athanaze

I am a Superficial Man

I am a superficial man
I do not do what I should
I inspire others
to do the things
that I could do yet
do not have
drive to.

L.A. Hollywood

The Joggers Life

Ten years ago, I used to smoke 40 cigarettes a a day and I realised how unfit I was getting with smoking a lot. If I didn't do something shortly, I wouldn't have seen 30! (I was 26 at the time and used to gasp for air when I was walking.) So I decided to give up cigarettes and I did very well for about three months. Then I was doing a bit of housework and I found a cigarette in a packet and I lit it and puffed it twice and I was so angry with myself. I put it out and went for a long walk and said to myself, I'm not going to let cigarettes get the better of me. I carried on with not smoking and then a weight problem occurred!

When I used to laugh at joggers around the park, I wouldn't have believed I'd be doing it myself. But the weight

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was going down, so it was doing me good.

And then I watched the first London Marathon in 1992 and I said to my workmates, "That's what I'd like to do." and they said to me, "You can't even run around the park." But with training for two years, I ended up doing the London Marathon myself. It's not just been one London Marathon - I've done three! And if anyone said, "Do you miss smoking?" I've got my health, wealth and my fitness.

When I smoked, I didn't like it when they said, "Could you not smoke for an hour or two?" Now I know how they feel, because I feel how they felt. The taste of the cigarettes gets in my mouth and affects my speech and I want to cough - I feel choked up.

Cornelius Scollon

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Let People Express Themselves

My experience in life has been hard but there has been good times as well.

I love to have lots of freedom and to let people express themselves. I do not like to live in fear and do not like seeing other people in fear. I try to let them get their own experiences.

I love children. I like the way they are always willing to learn, so I try to stay childlike and remember I'm a man who makes mistakes.

So if I do not know what is right for me, I do not know what is right for you, all I have is my experience.

Harry Eason

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TONIGHT I LAY HERE

Tonight I lay here in this tent a
Hundred thousand stars in sky
Waters running over rocks
Its music a thing to bring dreams
Winds rolling across the mountain tops then into
Valleys to moving trees around
You lay there strange sounds of the wilderness
It won't last
Dark clouds move in off the sea one last look
Then into sleeping bag
First a light rain then a down pour
Dawn comes damp winds blowing a dark wet day yet you know it won't last
Over the sea great beams of sun light comes

Through clouds reflecting off the sea five miles away
you eat your food out of tins then bury them
Then sit as sun comes up to you
Slowly dew leaves the ground in waves
Once shiny rocks turned dull grey
head off red flowers come out in wild confusion
Bees hum flies looking for something to attack
Your things dry out you curse as you move
Down the track with each step you take a new
View comes to you more breathtaking than the
Last so you know that you need to take up
A backpack when you can
To be back in the mountains that cool you all the time.

L.A. Hollywood

LIFE BACK HOME

Living in Grenada is a wonderful experience. It's a very hot country. The capital of Grenada is St. Georges, and the population is 110,000 people. The language we speak is English. During the months of the year it can be very hot at times. In Grenada we only have two seasons - dry season and rainy season. The average annual temperature is 80 f or 27 c. In Grenada we have three main crops. They are: cocoa; banana; and nutmeg. We use the nutmeg to make various things. We make things like: rum punch; guava jam; guava jelly; nutmeg syrups and nutmeg clothing right through the year.

A day out, early Saturday morning, is the best time to catch the colourful market. The surrounding area is the busy main shopping and banking centre. Grenada is very small. You can tour around in just one day. But at the end of your day you would not be so happy because the roads are very narrow and there are lots of steep hills to climb.

To me, going to the beach is one of the most exciting moments. You get a chance to meet up with other people and to have a blast together. We do things like: having a picnic; swimming; playing football; running races and boat riding. The most exciting time for me is playing football. It's one of my hobbies.

In Grenada, if you get lost on any of your visits, don't worry - you are not alone. There are lots of friendly Grenadians around to direct you to your way. This is life back home.

Evelyn Baptiste

Christmas Morning

Christmas morning up at seven to organic bread
Marmalade on brown bread
Kids up too early
TV on you back to bed
Waste of time lying here
Hoping they go away
Till lunch time some kind of
Pie that has a taste all its own
Home made fruit cake with a thin cool cream
That has no taste
Oh what happened to turkey - cold sausages
Now in place of wine - fresh juice.

L.A. Hollywood

FINDING A JOB

I find looking for a job in London is one of the hardest things I have ever seen. Where I came from it is hard too, but not as difficult as London. In London you have to have experience to get a job. I personally feel it's unfair, a person has every right to use his or her common senses to prove what he or she can do. Then they have right to pass it on to someone else.

Experience is very important but not everyone has a quick memory to grasp things fast. Every individual is made different. So I feel each one must be given a chance to prove his or her ability.

Evelyn Baptiste

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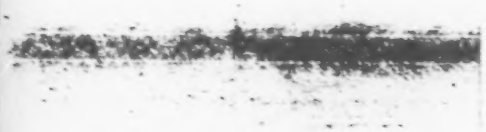
CHAPTER FIVE

The Ways of Learning Questionnaire



THE WAYS OF LEARNING QUESTIONNAIRE

The Ways of Learning Questionnaire came about as one result of the Ways of Learning Day and the Ways of Learning Weekend.

At the Ways of Learning Day (in May 1992), students were asked to think of questions they would like to ask of students in other Open Learning Centres or basic education classes. The questions were then put into a questionnaire format and piloted at the Ways of Learning Weekend (in July 1992).

Most people who came to the Weekend took copies of the questionnaire back to their classes or Centres and then sent in the completed copies to the Project Team. These are the results of their findings:

We asked :

1. Do you go to Open Learning?

and

Do you go to a class?

Of the 103 people who replied:
42 went to Open Learning Centre
14 went to classes
47 went to both

1a. How many people go to your Open Learning Centre?

It was difficult to get a clear idea of how many people attend different Open Learning Centres from the replies we had.

32 people said: up to 20
30 people said: from 21 to 30
8 people said: from 31 to 50
The rest said from 50 to 150

Students who discussed these findings at a meeting in January 1993 came to the conclusion that it is not the actual number of students attending that is important for the learner, but how many it feels like to that person. For instance, if your Centre is crowded at the time you usually attend, you may have estimated that 50 people attend, because it feels like 50 to you, but someone else, who comes at a time of day when the Centre is less crowded, may have estimated about 15.

1b How Many People Go to Your Class?

We thought that these figures might be more reliable as it is easier to notice how many students there are when you are all together for a two hour class. Answers were as follows:

6 people said: up to 6
19 people said: from 6 to 10
17 people said: from 11 to 15
4 people said: from 16 to 20
12 people said: over 21

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2. Do you have paid teachers?

We were surprised at the number of people (18) who said that they didn't have paid teachers. In fact, all the Centres we surveyed do have paid workers. We discussed this at the meeting in January and students there wondered whether learners assume that their teachers are not paid , when in fact they are. They thought that if learners believe teachers are just doing it out of the goodness of their hearts, it might explain why many students feel shy about making demands on their teachers, or saying what they really want to be learning or doing.

3. Do you have volunteer teachers?

A total of 80 people said yes to this question, although there seemed to be a higher proportion of volunteers in classes, than in Open Learning Centres.

4. Did your teachers check your level before you started tuition?

Eighty-nine out of ninety-nine students who replied to this question said yes. At first we thought this looked good, but then we thought that the ten who said no represented just over 10% of the replies. If this figure is the same throughout the country, then it means that a lot of students are starting tuition either without an assessment of their needs, or without realising they have been assessed.

5. Are your teachers friendly?

We weren't surprised to learn that almost all (99 out of 103) students thought their teachers were friendly. However, friendliness is not the only thing that students want from their tutors, as the next question indicates.

6. Have they got a caring way?

Although the response to this was quite positive (93 people said yes): in the OLC group, one student said no and one didn't reply; in the class group, one said no and one didn't reply. In both groups, five students said no and one said sometimes. This meant that nearly 10% of the people who replied did not feel their teachers were caring. We wondered whether this was true across the country.

7. How much do you pay for tuition?

About one third (34%) of the people who replied pay nothing for tuition. Almost the same number (35%), pay £15. We wondered whether there was any way that a standard rate could be set across the country.

7a. How much do you pay for your Centre?

Nothing - 16.7%
£1.00 - 7.1%
£2.00 - 16.7%
£15.00 - 59.5%

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7b. How much do you pay for your class?

Amounts people paid in classes varied a lot. The largest group (21.4%) paid nothing, and the second largest (14.3%) paid £21.00. Other people paid : up to £3.00 or £3.00-£7.00.

7c. How much do you pay for both?

Over half the people who attend both classes and Open Learning said that they paid nothing. We wondered if they would still be able to go to both if they had to pay.

8. Is there a creche for your Centre or class?

Only 14 out of 103 said yes to this question - 10 of those went to both classes and Open Learning.

9. Is there a students committee?

Students at the meetings we held thought it was important that students to get together and make their voices heard - particularly in Open Learning Centres, where they are often on their own for a lot of their learning time.

The replies we had showed that only 28 people had access to a student committee.

10. Do students in your class or Centre help each other?

Over half (54.4%) of the people we asked said yes a lot, and very few (7.8%) said they got no help at all from other students. 10% more class based students than open learning students said yes.

11. Do you ever get taught things that are no use to you?

29 people said: yes - sometimes, 5 people said: yes - often and 69 people said: no - never

12. Do you ever feel held back by other people in the Centre or class?

19 people said: yes - sometimes (8 in OLC 3 in class and 8 in both)
3 people said: yes - often
81 people said: no - never

13. Do you get homework?

It seems that if you go to classes you are far more likely to be offered homework to do than you are in open learning. In reply to this question: 71% in Open Learning said no and 14% in classes said no. 61% of people who go to both said no.

13a. Do you do it?

It seems that more people actually do homework, than are given homework. Although only 47 people reported that they were offered homework to do, 52 people reported that they did it anyway.

13c Is it marked?

Only 78% of people who did homework reported that it was marked. Students at the meetings were very concerned about this. They felt that all homework should be marked and that teachers should make time to look at it and give proper feedback to students.

14. Do you tell your friends that you go to classes or Centre?

Most people said yes to this question but 18 people said sometimes - the other four didn't reply.

15. Where do you live?

23% of the people who answered live in the North West of England and 77% live in the South East.

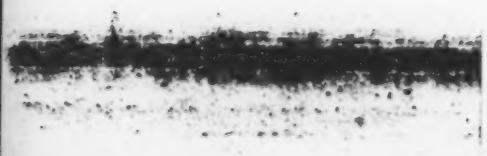
The reason the figures are so imbalanced is because two students from the South East spent a lot of time researching their own Centres in depth and asking as many students as they could to complete the questionnaire. They did this partly to gain Wordpower credits and partly to gain experience of research. They both presented their findings at a National Conference for teachers. On the next few pages, Freddie Allan discusses the findings from her Centre.

INTRODUCTION TO FREDRICAS REPORT

by Evelyn Baptiste

The students in Open Learning at Ealing Tertiary College find it helpful when they come to classes. They get their needs met and that helps them to understand things a lot better. People from all different kinds of life need to learn one way or the other. We have all been through some times in our life - so learning over again is not too late. After interviewing the students in Open Learning in Acton, I found that almost all the students are very happy with their study. The teachers there are very helpful, very loving and caring. The coordinator is very good. She's always there to see to students needs.

Acton Open learning Centre is very good in terms of the management of the Coordinator and teachers. The students are very helpful to one another and it has a very cheerful atmosphere.



A RESEARCH REPORT ON OPEN LEARNING

by Fredrica Allan

Introduction

I am a student in Ealing Tertiary College with the Open Learning for adults. I have been going to the Open Learning since February last year, when it was called New Study Centre. In October, 1992, the Study Centre became part of Ealing Tertiary College.

I met Chris last year while she was working on a project called Open Learning in Adult Basic Education. Later, she came around to interview me occasionally about what I'm doing and how I'm getting on with my studies. I was invited to Lancaster University to participate in a project called Ways of Learning. It was the most wonderful three days of my life. The reception we received when we arrived was pure magic.

Chris came to see me again after the weekend in Lancaster to see how I was getting on with my studies. It was on one of her visits that she asked me to do some research for the Open Learning in Adult Basic Education project. Doing the research will help me with my Wordpower Stage 2.

I was given questionnaire forms for students to fill. Then I had to put my findings in a graph. I also had to do a comparison between open learning and class students.

Before I go on to how I gained the information I will like to tell you the background of the Study Centre.

The Background of the Study Centre

Open Learning has actually been going for three years and was called The New Study Centre. A very few students used to attend the Study Centre, which was a project for unemployed adults to improve their English as a Second Language, their literacy, or their basic maths so that they could go to work/job or get on a course. This was a mixture of class teaching and some drop in provision (3 afternoons) and was not Open Learning.[1]

How I gained the Information

I went round to each student and asked if I could have five minutes of their time.

How Long it Took

Sometimes it takes ten to fifteen minutes to talk to a student, also after interviewing a student, we discussed other things.

How Many Students Interviewed

I interviewed 34 students and 23 of them go to the Open Learning Centre.

How Some Students Reacted

Most of the students were very helpful when I interviewed them. Two to five students were difficult about being interviewed. They wanted to know what I needed the information for and how it was going to be used, but after I explained to them what the information was for, they became pleasant about it all.

[1] *All this means is that before there was no work plans, some books around, but not organized for students to help themselves. It was not open so many hours.*

Students in Other Class

Students in other classes in Ealing Tertiary College find that when they come to Open Learning they get more help with their work, but in college the teacher just gives you the assignment without any help whatsoever. I witnessed one student coming from Ealing Tertiary College one Thursday last year to see the teacher in Acton Open Learning. She was lost because her teacher gave her an assignment she had no idea about how to begin or to end. She was in a right state. The point is - just because you are in College doesn't mean you know it all. Everyone needs help one way of the other and it can be frustrating at times for students at any level. Education is very important and should under no circumstances be rushed.

These Are Some of the Questions I Asked:

Do you enjoy going to the Open Learning?

I asked 34 students if they enjoy going to open learning and they all said yes because the teachers are friendly and the atmosphere in the room is warm. Other students show interest in one another and it's just great to be somewhere where everyone cares about one another.

How long have you been going to Open Learning?

The length of time students have been been going to Open Learning differs from as little time as two weeks, to 9 months, to 8 years (in one case).

How is the Open Learning helping you?

All the students said with their basic maths, basic computing, English, spelling, writing, reading and also communication.

What have you achieved since going to Open Learning?

I asked 34 students what they achieved since going to the Open Learning. Here are what some of them said:

Dell: City &Guilds Maths Certificate and she's doing a nursing course, works in hospital, and is now doing Wordpower and Numberpower Stage 2.

Derek: City & Guilds English and Maths Certificate. He is now doing GCSE Maths course and got the confidence to do this from Open Learning, also computer skills.

David: Working on Wordpower Stage 1. Hopes to get City & Guilds Certificate, also have computer skills.

Len: He is able to write poetry and short stories; did a magazine for the Open Learning last year. Also doing GCSE English. He has gained more confidence in himself.

Sandra: Finished Wordpower Stage 1 and waiting for Numberpower City & Guilds Certificate. Also working on Wordpower Stage 2. Trying her hand in writing short stories.

What would you like to see change in the Open Learning?

23 students said 'more teachers'
15 said 'bigger rooms'
1 said 'more computers'
2 said 'more varied hours'
10 said 'longer hours'
1 said 'speaking class'
1 said 'teachers should get more pay'
4 said 'no comment for now'
1 said 'happy the way things are now'.

No Comments about Achievements - Fourteen students said it was too soon to comment, because they have not been coming for long or they have not had enough studies.

THE IRONY OF 1993

On 11th January 1993, first day back in the Open Learning Centre, and just as students were preparing to start work, the Coordinator came and told us about the events that had been happening. One of them was that on Monday 11th January, adult education in the whole of the borough was going to be cut completely because of a funding crisis.

The decision has been reversed now, but students in Acton Open Learning have to suffer in terms of teachers. Whereas we used to have two part time English teachers and two part time maths teachers - also the Coordinator could give extra help, we now only have the Coordinator and a teacher who is new to us. They take it in turns to come around to us but we no more have Maths teachers. The coordinators office has been moved to upstairs and is much further away. Also her secretary, who dealt with the office work while she went to meetings and who sometimes came around to the class to offer help to the students, is gone.

Students were able to photocopy work to take home, they can't now. Also the times the Centre opens is changed - Tuesdays before was 10.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. - it is now 1.15 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. with the Coordinator working with all the students. Open Learning still has the volunteer teachers coming but the situation is in a mess. Despite the reassurance the Coordinator has given the students, it is still upsetting to all. Then, on 25th January students were again told by the Coordinator that there is going to be a Maths teacher for two hours on Tuesday and two hours Thursday. English students are going to suffer on Tuesday morning

because the full time teachers are on a course and so the only teachers we have are volunteers. I hope the government will realise how important education is, regardless of age.

People from all walks of life need to learn at some stage of their life - in this case adults. For one reason or another mothers, grandmothers and fathers need to learn some things they could not do when they were young, due to circumstances of any kind. There are a lot of things one can do without if one has to, but education and health are things that no one should play with because without these two things, what else have we got? The world is in a mess because most of the people are not well educated. How can we teach our children anything if we, the parents, are not well educated ourselves? For reasons no-one knows things do go wrong in our lives sometimes, somewhere, somehow. No one blames anyone for this unfortunate fact but you realise your mistake and try to repair it - be it anything. It would be a great shame to society if they don't wake up to the most important problem of all - education.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After interviewing the students in the Open Learning in Acton, I found that almost all the students are very happy with their studies. The teachers are very helpful, very loving and caring. The Coordinator is very good - always there to see to students needs, always pointing students in the right direction for books or where to start. She takes her job very seriously. Students come from all over the borough to Acton Open Learning and they truly enjoy going there.

However, one or two students had something else to say - which was: because there are not enough teachers sometimes it's difficult to get the teachers attention which can be frustrating at times.

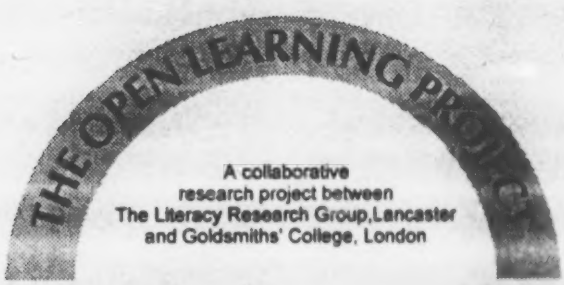
The Open Learning room is too small. Sometimes it is even difficult to get a chair and table to work on.

Students also said they get confused when two teachers look at their work. One teacher would ask you to do your work this way and another teacher would ask you to do the same work another way. Acton Open Learning is very good in terms of the management of the coordinator and teachers. The students are very helpful to one another and it has a very cheerful atmosphere. But we could do with more teachers, longer hours, more computers and - most important - bigger room.

Fredrica Allan

I said I'd think about coming,
but thought "no".
But I did.
Thought "No, I will hate it."
But I was wrong.
I've really got into it,
the people are sound.
It's taught me a lot.
It's been wild.

Louise Pollett



THE OPEN LEARNING PROJECT
Open Learning in Adult Basic Education

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